

S E R M O N .

The Design of Civil Government and the Extent of its Authority, as set forth in the Holy Scriptures.

The subject to which this discourse is to be devoted is confessed on all hands to be one of deep interest and importance, demanding from all good citizens, and especially from all Christian citizens, most serious and impartial investigation. A difficulty exists, however, in the minds of many, which, standing directly in the way of a candid and impartial hearing on this occasion, deserves to be noticed in the outset. It is said the pulpit has nothing to do with politics, and any attempt to discuss this question in the pulpit, is to transcend the just limits of a preacher's privilege, and of course of his duty also. So far as this relates to questions merely political, the objection is unquestionably relevant and just. The pulpit has nothing to do with the discussion of questions of policy and expediency, such as are generally held in controversy between the political parties of the country. But if a singular phenomenon should occasionally be witnessed in the shape of a question of *righteousness* looming above the horizon, and blazing portentously in the political heavens; and political society rises above its ordinary level and forgets its rivalries and partisan disputes in the effort to comprehend a pure morality; we conceive the case to be very different from the former. Any question plainly taught in the Scriptures, it is the business of the Christian minister to teach and urge, at such times as may seem in his judgment most fitting; nor is he to be deterred from the faithful performance of his duty by the hue and cry of politicians, or the danger of an appropriation of his remarks by politicians to party uses. With me one strong reason why ministers should hold themselves aloof from the ordinary party strifes of the day is, that when grave questions of right and duty arise, and there is a demand for a faithful and fearless application of the principles and precepts of Christianity, he may, without suspicion of party taint, discuss such questions with all the advantages of a reputation for impartiality.

And with the great and good Chalmers, we say that "On the one hand a just administration will never take offense at a minister, who renders a pertinent rebuke to any set of men, even though they should happen to be their own agents, or their own underlings: and that on the other hand, a minister who is actuated by the true spirit of his office, will never so pervert or prostitute his functions as to descend to the humble arena of partisanship. He is the faithful steward of such things as are profitable for reproof, and for doctrine, and for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. His single object with the men who are within reach of his hearing, is that they should come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. In the fulfillment of this object he is not the servant of any administration—though he certainly renders such a service to the State as will facilitate the work of governing to all administrations—as will bring a mighty train of civil and temporal blessings along with it, and in particular as will diffuse over the whole sphere of his influence, a loyalty as steadfast as the friends of order can wish, and as free from every taint of political severity as the most genuine friends of freedom can desire." I have only to add that in the discussion of this subject, I have not paused to consider, nor do I care what may be the bearing upon the political discussions and party interests of the present

time, of the principles and sentiments here set forth. I speak not as a politician. My only anxiety is to ascertain and communicate clear views of Christian duty—the Scriptural extent of submission to the civil authorities of the land. We proceed to the subject.

Three divine institutions revealed in the Scriptures and established in society, demand our special attention. These are the FAMILY—the STATE—the CHURCH. These are all of divine appointment, and on a faithful discharge of duty by the members of these institutions, depends the peace and welfare of society.* The Family is the home of the affections—where husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, live in sacred fellowship; and where conjugal affection, parental authority, filial reverence, and fraternal regard are all intended to combine, for the production of largest happiness to its members. Here earliest and most lasting impressions are made, and character is formed for time and eternity, I had almost said beyond the power of change—and from hence are furnished to the State and the Church their subjects and their rulers. The State is society enlarged. It is composed of all who are embraced within any territorial limits over which one government extends its authority; and the magistracy in that State, embraces the rulers and judges who administer justice and see to the faithful execution of the laws—be they known as Emperors, Kings, Consuls, Electors, Presidents, Governors, or by any other name. The *end* of the magistracy as set forth in the Scriptures, is *temporal good*—the protection of society from evil and evil doers, and the encouragement of all that tends to the general peace and welfare. The Church is composed of believers in Jesus Christ who walk in his commandments and ordinances: and its great design is the salvation of the world from sin and death,—the conversion of sinners, the perfection of saints—in a word, the preparation of our nature for immortal honors and felicities in the presence of God. Though all alike responsible to God, yet the authorities in these different institutions are not the same. Over the Family, the husband and father is placed as the head; over the State, the magistrate of whatever name: over the Church, Jesus Christ, whom the Father hath given to be “head over all things for the Church, which is his body—the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” Now the only just conception we can form of perfect society in the present life, and under the present constitution of our being, is the harmonious operation and co-operation of these three institutions without jar or conflict. Society will have reached its highest earthly perfection when the Family, the State, and the Church accomplish respectively their appropriate ends; and the educated and obedient child growing up into the enlightened, enterprising, orderly citizen, and perfecting his character as an humble, earnest, devout Christian, will stand forth before the world, the highest style of man. But society is not perfect. In the inharmonious movements of these institutions, in the frequent clashings and jarrings of domestic, political and religious interests, we are furnished with superabundant evidences of the imperfect state of society now existing. Oftentimes the requirements of the State are such as cannot be met by the members of ill-trained families, whose habits and tendencies of life are by no means accordant with the demands or restraints of law. Too often the State’s own permissions and ordinations are at war with other permissions and ordinations emanating from the same source. And not infrequently it occurs that the requirements of the just and holy law which the Church recognizes as binding, is in opposition alike to the wishes of the father and the child, the demands of the magistrate, and the purposes of the citizen. We ask then, when these various authorities conflict, which is the Christian to acknowledge as supreme? And I ask this especially in reference to any conflict that may arise, between the authorities of the State and the Church—for the matter of parental authority is not embraced in our subject except for the sake of illustration. We have not to

*Since this discourse was written, I have read with pleasure a Sermon on “Conscience and Law,” by Wm. W. Patten, of Hartford, Conn., in which some of the same thoughts and arguments here employed, are urged with great force.

do with this question as bearing on any of the disputes belonging to other ages and other lands: the claims of papal authority, the various forms and phases of politico-ecclesiastical governments, Erastianism, &c., &c., where the love of power and the dread of tyranny, had more to do with shaping opinions than the plain dictates of the Spirit of God. We are happily freed from these controversies and the occasions of them. With us it is not a question of the union of Church and State, but a simple question of duty to the government on the part of Christians. Are there any limits to the submission we owe to the government under which we live? And if so, what are the proper limits? The authority of Jesus Christ over the subjects of his government is *absolute and unlimited*. "All authority in heaven and in earth is given unto me." "He is Lord of all." This is acknowledged by all who submit to his reign, and being undisputed, needs no farther proof. Then the authority of the State must be *conditional and limited*—for there cannot be two absolute, unlimited authorities. This would seem at once to settle the question. Indeed God himself is the author of the State. It rests for its existence and authority not on any "social compact," but on the will of God written on the very nature that we wear. The *form* of government may depend on the social compact, but government itself grows out of a necessity of our nature. So as God is its author, his will must be supreme. But let us look at some Scripture testimonies. Passing by the allusions and intimations which in a larger discussion might be not unprofitably gleaned from the Gospels and Acts, we come to the explicit teachings of the Apostles. "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work. Titus 3: 1. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king." 1st Pet. 2: 13–17. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For, for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing." Rom. 13: 1–6. These precepts it must be admitted are very emphatic; and their language appears to be unqualified. Many, therefore, have argued for an unlimited obedience to the State. But a single glance at the consequences involved in this proposition will, we think, suffice to show its falseness. Remember this language was uttered under the imperial despotism of the bloody Nero. If unlimited submission to the State is taught, then all advancement from that galling despotism towards civil and religious liberty, has been in opposition to the gospel. Every great step of progress from that to the present has been in the face of established authorities: and therefore, *all progress is wrong*. Protestantism set at naught the requirements alike of Popes and Emperors—not needlessly nor recklessly, it is true, but still it did set them at naught; and on the assumption of unlimited submission to civil authorities, Protestantism is wrong! So is our own government wrong; and our institutions are built up in violation of the law of God! More than that, Christ and the Apostles are found at war with their own teachings. Jesus said, "But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues: and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles." Matt. 10: 17–19. "And remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than

his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also." Jno. 15: 20. "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." Jno. 16: 2. And concerning the early labors of the Apostles in Jerusalem, it is said that the Jewish council "called them, and commanded them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said unto them, whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Acts 4: 18-20. Again, "And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them, saying, did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and behold ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us. Then Peter and the other Apostles answered and said, we ought to obey God rather than man." Acts 5: 27-29. Clearly then, they did not intend that their language should be understood in this unqualified sense. Now the language respecting submission to *parents* is equally broad and unqualified. "Children obey your parents in *all things*: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord." Col. 3: 20. Yet Jesus says, "For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." Matt. 10:35-37. Again: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Luke 14: 26. And in *this* case too, the language already quoted from Acts, shows that there were cases when in discharging their duty to God, they felt warranted in setting at naught, the opposing requirements of the civil magistracy. But are we at liberty to set aside the demands of the government in anything but religion? Yes, in *every* case where such demands are opposed to the demands of the divine government. We have just as clear a right to refuse obedience to *inhuman* as to *irreligious* enactments. It is no more our duty to sin against *man*, than to sin against *God*, at the bidding of the magistrate. To deny this, is to give to royal edicts and legislative enactments, the power of transmuting wrong into right by the utterance of a word—and war, rapine, slavery, extortion, and all crimes are most commendable and virtuous practices! Aristotle informs us that it was enacted at Athens, that "infants which appeared to be maimed, should be either killed or exposed." Did that make it *right* to kill a deformed infant? It was also enacted that the Athenians might "lawfully invade and enslave any people, who in their opinion might be made slaves." Was it therefore *right* either to make or hold slaves under that law? In most of our slave States, there are laws prohibiting the instruction of negroes in reading, writing, &c. Is it therefore *right* to withhold instruction from them, and bind their souls as well as their bodies in galling fetters? In the language of a greatly admired, living author, from some of whose views and reasonings we shall be compelled to dissent before the close of this discourse, we say—

"There are two sciences, and but two, wholly unsusceptible of improvement. These, the Author of the Universe, by a patent which no man can invade, but at the peril of his eternal destiny, has both wisely and kindly reserved to himself. I need not say that these are the sciences of Religion and Morality. No finite being who surveys not the Universe in all its infinite and eternal dimensions, nor man in all his mysterious and sublime organization and capacity, with his immortal interests in all the creation of God, could possibly project or develop these. They are sciences, which by an insuperable and stern necessity must be, not merely superhuman, but supernatural and divine. There is a world above us, and a world within us, for which no man nor angel could legislate. A moral code beyond the capacity and supervision of man—extending too in its requisitions, into a kingdom over which no human tribunal can extend any jurisdiction—is as necessary to moral government, as oxygen to combustion, or caloric to human life. There is an empire in the human heart, over which no

man nor angel can preside, and a throne in the midst of it, on which no king can sit, but the king of eternity. For this one reason alone, which is as good as a thousand, and to which the addition of a thousand could give no weight, religion and morals are sciences wholly supernatural and divine. Civil government is itself a divine appendix added to the volumes of religion and morality."* The question returns then, how far may we go in submission to civil government, seeing its authority is necessarily limited? We answer just as far as its behests and requisitions are in harmony with the precepts of the New Testament, *and no further.*

The design of civil government is *the public good*. "He is the minister of God to thee for good." "Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same." Governors are sent "for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well." When, then, "the powers that be" are thus employed, and this is the aim and tendency of their laws and proceedings,—to punish evil doers, and encourage and protect those who do good, it is unquestionably our duty to be obedient.

Again. There may be objectionable laws—laws inexpedient, though not immoral. These the Christian has no right to resist. He had no right to resist such laws, even under the despotism of Rome; and surely *here* he can afford to be submissive, where the power to alter and amend, or repeal, is within reach of the people, and no law generally felt to be seriously objectionable can long remain undisturbed. There may also be laws permitting wrong, yet not *requiring* it at the Christian's hands. These he may and ought to as a Christian testify against. In word and deed he should be a "light in the world, holding forth the word of life," and exposing the wrongs and corruptions of society. But so long as *he* is not compelled to do wrong; so long as the magistrate is God's minister to *him* for good, so long he ought to be in obedience to the civil authorities.

There may be too, laws positively injurious, which, nevertheless, do not require anything unrighteous on our part, which it is better to submit to than to resist. "For the Apostle mentions the *end of magistracy*, which is the good of society, as the great foundation of allegiance, not the end of every *measure* which the magistrate may think proper to adopt. Many measures he may adopt, that are improper; notwithstanding which, the end of the office,—the *common good*—may be promoted by him. And true public spirit incites us equally, in what regards the community to prefer the greatest of different good things, and the least of different ills. Now there may be many bad measures adopted by the ruling powers, which nevertheless, could not do half the mischief that would necessarily ensue from the subversion of authority. For it should always be taken into consideration that resistance strikes immediately, not only against the particular measure resisted, but against the office of the magistrate, and therefore tends totally to subvert authority and unhinge the constitution. If then, by resisting we loose as much as in us lies the bands of society, and introduce anarchy with all its baneful consequences, on account of any measures, the ill effects whereof are not so much to be dreaded as those wherein the nation would be involved by the dissolution of government, we run into a greater evil to avoid the less."†

When then, it is asked, *is* revolution justifiable? Were I giving a patriot's answer to a patriot's question, I would say, when the design of government has been so far abused and perverted, that the terrors of civil war are less to be dreaded than the continuance of such a government. But as a Christian answering a Christian's question, I say—*Never*. The Christian has nothing to do with bloody revolutions. Upon the question of the right of self-defense on the part of individuals or nations, I offer no argument here. But wars, revolutionary or otherwise, such as are generally recorded on the pages of history, out of which nations have grown, and by which nations have been maimed or destroyed, belong not

*A. Campbell, Mill. Harbinger, 1846, page 123.

†George Campbell, D. D.

to the follower of the Prince of Peace. The weapons of his warfare are not carnal. His place on the battle-field is by the side of the noble-hearted Mexican woman who, in one of the battles of the recent war with our sister Republic, was seen stooping with equal sympathy and kindness over the prostrate and bleeding forms of friend and foe—now listening to the cries in her native language of a Mexican in distress, anon responding to a call for help from a sufferer whose strange accents bespoke him the invader of her nation's peace. And if he falls upon the battle field, it should be with the happy consciousness that must have cheered the heart of that woman, when she died amidst the roar of artillery and the clash of swords—that life had been employed to bless and not to curse; to save and not to destroy. "I came not to destroy men's lives but to save them," said Jesus. And again, "My kingdom is not of this world, else would my servants have fought for me: but now is my kingdom not from hence." The Christian has indeed a sword to wield and power to employ, more to be dreaded than the sword of the soldier, the prowess of the most experienced and valorous army, the might of the upheaving earthquake, or the resistless sweep of the tempest. It is the sword of the Spirit—the power of truth, the conquering energy of love. Truth is the Christian's "rod of strength;" nay, it is the utterance of the power of the Almighty! Its illuminations are divinely beautiful and penetrating,—chasing away the darkness of ignorance—banishing the deeds and unmasking the workers of darkness in the terrible nakedness of their corruptions; and throwing its splendors over scenes of duty and of toil all gloomy before, but now most inviting and delightful. Its trumpet-tongued call to duty, is more startling than the thunders of the sky—its indignant frown turned against evil-doers, is darker than the thunder cloud—its rebuke more dreadful and scathing than the thunderbolt! And when with this illuminating, purifying, revolutionizing power of truth, is joined the gentleness and fervor of the love of Christ, and the heart of society not only trembles at the revelations and rebukes of one, but suffers its icy selfishness to melt away before the fervid beams of the other,—then indeed the "wilderness and the solitary place are made glad, and the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose." Christ has then "a willing people in the day of his power," and in all nations where his soldiers bear his banner, unstained but by the blood of his own sacrifice, bearing emblazoned on its folds the heaven-descended Spirit-Dove, and the mild Star of Bethlehem, joyful captives, more numerous than the dew drops of the morning, will submit to his sway, and learn the song first sung by angel bands, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will towards men." In these moral revolutions the Christian may display his heroism; but on fields of carnage, as an avenger of his country's wrongs, *never*.

From all the premises before us we conclude—

1st. That if the Christian is required by the government to obey an unrighteous law—a law conflicting with the plain and explicit demands of the law of Christ—he must refuse to obey, and rather submit to the penalty, whatever that may be. But beyond that, he cannot Scripturally go in disobedience. He dare not lift a hand of violence even against an unjust government, but while firmly refusing to yield to its unrighteous demands, must still obey in all things lawful, and "render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, and honor to whom honor. He is also to "pray for kings and all that are in authority," that Christians "may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty."

2d. He must bear faithful witness against wrong and iniquity, and wrestle even "against principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and spiritual wickedness in high places." Yet he is not allowed to speak abusively or irreverently of established authorities. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: but chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they and self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities; whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord."

2d Peter 2: 9-11. "Likewise also these filthy dreamers, defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities: yet Michael, the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation; but said—the Lord rebuke thee." Jude 8: 9. He may cry as Isaiah did, "Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil: that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." Isa. 5: 20. And, "Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed; to turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless." Isa. 10: 1-2. But his language must be free from all charge of licentiousness. If the archangel did not bring against Satan a railing accusation, we are certainly not warranted in the use of undignified language and harsh epithets when speaking of the rulers and legislators whom we have ourselves elected to office.

In view of these restrictions upon the Christian's speech and actions, we feel constrained to use the language of censure in reference to some expressions of feeling, which we have noticed in the resolutions of public meetings, designed to bear against the Fugitive Slave Law. Generally, I am glad to say the resolutions adopted at these meetings, throughout the North, are temperate, though firm in the utterance of opinion and feeling; and while expressing indignation at the unrighteous provisions of the law, still breathe a spirit of strong attachment to the Union, and limit those who approved them to the employment of constitutional means for the repeal of the law. I say so far as I have noticed, this is *generally* true. The fears expressed in certain quarters of a resort to violence, and of a disruption of the Union, certainly rest on a very slender foundation; and the charge of encouraging a spirit of violence, when directed against Anti-Slavery men, is equally false with another charge, so oft repeated, of their efforts to entice slaves to run away from their masters, and to stir them up to rebellion against the white population of the South. Still there have been some violations of good taste and Christian propriety, and some departures from Christian prudence also, in the resolutions adopted at public meetings. I give a few specimens of expressions of feeling which every Christian ought to reprobate.

"Resolved, That we look upon the President and all those who voted for the fugitive slave bill, or intentionally dodged the question, with contempt and utter abhorrence, and no better than Algerine pirates."

"Resolved, That in our opinion, a baser set of unprincipled villains never disgraced a tyrant's throne, than the authors and abettors of the fugitive slave law." *

This is certainly "speaking evil of dignities." Nothing is to be gained for truth or justice by the use of such language. A *good* cause is rather weakened than strengthened by such exuberance of wrathful words. And in a country where reverence for superiors, and for those in authority, needs to be strengthened rather than weakened, those who desire the triumph of justice and humanity, should not suffer themselves to be betrayed into intemperate and unjustifiable expressions, from which no advantage is to be reaped, but which must prove offensive to good taste, gentlemanly dignity and Christian propriety. I know we shall be told that the gross injustice inflicted on a part of the population by the fugitive slave law, calls for language of severity and indignation. That may be, but it certainly does not call for language of extravagance and abuse. Indeed, such language is generally regarded as betraying a weak or a bad cause, and must therefore injure a good cause in the estimation of all good men. This, however, let me say, is one of the vices of the age. It belongs to no party. It is not even confined to political papers. It defiles not infrequently the religious newspapers of the day—it has a most unhappy influence over society, and especially over the young, who reading weekly, and perhaps daily, the public journals, and accustomed to the undignified, and oftentimes vituperative and slan-

*Proceedings of a meeting at Pleasant Valley, Mahoning county, Ohio.

derous language directed at the character and doings of Presidents, Governors, Legislators, Reformers, Religionists, and all that act a leading part in any important public movements, grow up into manhood with feelings of disdain and contempt for all but their own cherished men and measures. Mons. De Tocqueville, in his most admirable work on Democracy in America, mentions that on his arrival in this country, the first newspaper over which he cast his eye, contained a most abusive article directed against the President of the United States. And although to that philosopher and acute observer, it was not so alarming as to many, still it did not make him think any better of our national character, nor was it any commendation of our free institutions. "Evil communications corrupt good manners." "Let no corrupt communications proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers."

In the following resolution, the *sentiment* and not the *language*, is reprehensible.

"As Christians we do not recommend physical force to oppose this law, and we disapprove all combinations for resistance, by force of arms, and the shedding of blood; but nevertheless, we cannot regard it as criminal in the alleged fugitive (in the position in which the Fugitive Slave Law places him) to defend himself even if need be with violence, inasmuch as he is by the operation of this law placed beyond the protection common to civilized society—and is thereby thrown back upon those rights which belong to man in a state of nature, or before society is organized."*

"The fugitive has the same natural right to defend himself against the slave catcher, or his constitutional tool, that he has against a murderer or a wolf. The man who attacks me to reduce me to slavery, in that moment of attack alienates his right to life, and if I were the fugitive and could escape in no other way, I would kill him with as little compunction as I would drive a mosquito from my face." (Theodore Parker's Sermon, preached Sept. 22, 1850.)

Now whatever men of the world, who have no higher trust than an arm of flesh, may think of the propriety of the course here allowed and *almost* recommended, it cannot but awake regret, that professed Christians should offer such counsel to the victims of wrong. We have not so learned Christ. "I say unto you, that ye resist not evil." "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you." Matt. 5: 39, 44. "Servants be subject to your masters with all fear, not only to the good and gentle but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy if a man, for conscience towards God, endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if when ye do well, and suffer for it ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps." 1st Pet. 2: 18-21.

I know it is *hard* thus to endure wrong, but it is *right*, and therefore *best*. It is better even to be dragged back into slavery, and lose all the cherished joys of freedom, and be made a martyr in a righteous cause, than to shed a drop of the blood of an enemy. The fugitive, if reduced to this extremity, can do more for his oppressed race by patiently suffering, than by stubbornly and violently resisting. And if Providence assigns him the fate to suffer for the good of others, and ordains the eloquence of his wrongs as the means of stirring the heart of the nation, and deepening the hate of oppression, and hastening the repeal of the unjust law—why let him glory in his sufferings and rejoice that a just and merciful God will reward him.

Having thus pointed out what I conceive to be the just limits of the authority of the magistrate, and the duty of the Christian, when asked to obey unrighteous laws, I proceed to speak of the Fugitive Slave Law, and to apply these lessons of duty to this particular case.

And here let me clear the question of false issues. We are told that "the

*First Presb. Church in Chicago.

law in question for reclaiming fugitive servants is to any ordinary mind, most obviously and perfectly constitutional." This language it is true is not very complimentary to President Fillmore and his distinguished Secretary of State, and many more prominent and truly great men, to whom this law was *not* "most obviously and perfectly constitutional." But it matters not. Right is right, and wrong is wrong, whether in the constitution or out of it. And the question is not, Is it constitutional? but, Is it right? As American citizens, taking pride in our constitution and government, it may be a matter of interest to prove that this odious law is unconstitutional; but so far as our inquiries into Christian duty are concerned, the controversy touching the constitutionality of the law, is of less importance.

Again it is said, it is no worse than the law of '93. This, whether true or not, does not affect the question before us. The question is—Is it a righteous or an unrighteous law?

It is not a question either, whether the law is simply *objectionable*, but whether it is *unrighteous*.

I am fully satisfied after very serious and anxious thought and investigation, that it belongs to the class of "unrighteous decrees," and ought not, therefore, to be obeyed.

1st. I hold it to be unrighteous to deliver up a fugitive from oppression.

The law of Moses said—"Thou shalt not deliver unto his master, the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee: He shall dwell with thee, even among you in that place which he shall choose, in one of thy gates where it liketh him best: thou shalt not oppress him." Deut. 23: 15-16. We are told that this was the case of Gentile servants fleeing from idolatrous nations, and coming to join themselves to the people of God. This is assumed without proof. If true, then there was no fugitive law for the Hebrew servant. But admitting it true, then the case stands thus:—in Israel there were laws, merciful and just, regulating servitude; and judges, by an appeal to whom, the servant could have justice done him. But when a Gentile slave fled from an oppressive master, from whom no justice was to be expected, they were forbidden to deliver the fugitive.

Now read the following testimonies from Southern men, as to the intellectual and moral condition of the slaves:

Rev. C. C. Jones, in a sermon preached before two associations of planters in Georgia—in the year 1831, says, "They are a nation of *heathen* in our very midst." "How can you pray for Christ's kingdom to come, while you are neglecting a people perishing for lack of vision around your very doors." "We withhold the Bible from our servants and keep them in ignorance of it, while we *will* not use the means to have it explained to them."

An official report of the Presbyterian Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, adopted at its session in Columbia, S. C., and published in the Charleston Observer of March 22d, 1834, speaking of the slaves, says—"There are over two millions of human beings in the condition of *heathen*, and in some respects in a *worse condition*." "From long continued and close observation, we believe that their moral and religious condition is such as that they may justly be considered the *heathen* of this Christian country, and *will bear comparison with the heathen in any country in the world*." "The negroes are destitute of the principles of the Gospel and *ever will be under the present state of things*."

"The Kentucky Union," for the moral and religious improvement of the colored race, says of the female slave population, (in a circular to the religious public,) "A similar condition of moral pollution and utter disregard of a pure and virtuous reputation, is to be found *only without the pale of Christendom*." That such a state of society should exist in a Christian nation, without calling forth any particular attention to its existence, though ever before our eyes and in our families, is a moral phenomenon at once unaccountable and disgraceful."

Whatever may be the attractions of Southern society, so far as the slaveholding population is concerned; be they ever so refined, hospitable, generous, and nice in their sense of honor; and we are free to accord to them many shining virtues,

and commendable qualities of character:—it is evident that to the soul of the slave it is heathenish darkness and degradation.

Now, I ask if a slave flees from the midst of this region of darkness and valley of the shadow of death, is there not as good reason to refuse to deliver him to his master, as under the Jewish law? Would the Jewish law have returned such a fugitive? Or will I be told that their condition is greatly improved since these startling testimonials were given? Then I ask what does the following language mean? "The conviction but deepens with my years of experience and observation, that the spirit which animates this crusade against Southern institutions by Northern men, but exasperates the master, exacerbates the slaves, extends the territory, and prolongs the existence of this obnoxious institution."* If this conviction is well founded, and things are worse there than formerly, we cannot return the fugitive; and if, contrary to the editor of the *Harbinger's* impression, there has been a marked improvement in the condition and treatment of the slaves, then why are the efforts of anti slavery men to expose the evils and abominations of slavery, so much deprecated as being injurious to the slave?

But if later testimonies are desired, they can be furnished. Here is one from a source certainly entitled to consideration. It is from Rev. Moses Stuart's recent pamphlet, entitled "Conscience and the Constitution,"—a work which certainly redeems his character from any suspicion of unjust prejudice against Southern institutions, or any sympathy with abolitionists. He speaks as a friend of the South. Yet he is compelled to say of the slave population, that "the young females, ignorant and without a sense of delicacy implanted and cherished, are at the mercy of their masters, young and old. And although the accusation of universal pollution among the masters of the South is far from being true, yet one cannot walk the streets of any large town or city in a slaveholding State, without seeing such a multitude of mulattos, mestizos, quadroons, etc., as proves, beyond all possible question, a widely diffused profligacy and licentiousness. It is in vain to deny it. There they are, stamped by heaven with the indelible marks of their polluted origin—a spectacle which might make the sun to blush as he looks down upon them."

Talk not of obeying a law of God in returning to the midst of *such* abominations, the wretched fugitive—to be, for aught we can tell, the helpless victim of unbridled passion!

But it is said this is not a law of Christianity. I ask is Christianity less merciful to the oppressed than Judaism? Is He of whom it is beautifully said, "He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor:" is He less compassionate to the helpless victim of oppression than Moses was? *Is it darker at noonday than at midnight?* Let us be careful what we say.

But listen to the following—"But some Christians are conscientious about giving up a servant—a runaway servant to his master. So was not Paul, when he sent the runaway, Onesimus, home to his master. So was not an angel of God, when he commanded the runaway Hagar, to 'go home to her mistress.' In this our day of high-wrought sentimentalism, we have some very romantic and imaginative philanthropists."†

Now what would you think of this reasoning? Some Christians are very conscientious about having more wives than one. So was not Abram, who took Hagar to wife in addition to Sarai. So was not an angel of God, who commanded Abram's runaway wife to return to her place again. Verily in this our day of high-wrought sentimentalism, we have some very romantic and imaginative moralists!

Now the simple facts are these. Hagar was Abram's wife—his secondary wife—for they practised polygamy in those days. Sarai, the principal wife, in a fit of jealousy, afflicted Hagar, the inferior wife, and drove her away. The angel of the Lord paid Hagar a visit of *mercy*, and advised her to return to her place in the family again, especially in view of the fact that her offspring was

* *Mill Harbinger*, Jan. 1851, p. 32.

† *Mill Harbinger*, Jan. 1851, p. 29.

to become a great nation; and it was proper that Abram's child should be reared in Abram's house. And this is introduced as a case parallel to that of the fugitive slave! Nay, I once read a speech from a somewhat celebrated Presbyterian divine, in which he represents this angel as "the mighty Redeemer" descending from heaven to tell "a poor abused and afflicted runaway slave" to return and place herself under the hands of her mistress, that she might receive another severe flogging! Well did the poet say to the slave:

"Trade, wealth, and fashion ask you still to bleed,
And holy men give Scripture for the deed."

But enough of this. We come to the case of Onesimus. And here we observe first, it is by no means certain that he was a *slave*. He was a servant of some sort, but that he was a slave, is doubtful. He is spoken of as *owing* Philemon, and Paul asks that the debt should be put to his account. Apart from what was called their *peculium*, Roman slaves could *own* nothing, and *owe* nothing, for all they had was their master's. Paul commends him to Philemon, as a "brother beloved both in the flesh and in the Lord." This does not sound much like slavery. It may mean no more than that Philemon and Onesimus were of the same nation, but it *may* mean also, that Onesimus and Philemon were *kindred*. It is quite as likely that under the *Grecian* law he was a freedman; for the term *doulos* here employed to denote his position and character, is that by which freedmen in Greece were distinguished. But, admit him to be Philemon's slave—he is not sent back to be oppressed and crushed in spirit, and ground down by a cruel and heartless master, as must often be the case under this fugitive law. He sends him back with this injunction to Philemon—"Receive him as myself"—and expressing this conviction on his own part—"Knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say." Let it be remembered too, that Onesimus *voluntarily returned*, assured that it was better for him so to do. And he returned to Colosse with a high commendation from Paul to the Church. "All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord: whom I have sent unto you, for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts; with Onesimus a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They shall make known unto you, all things that are done here." Col. 4: 7:9. And this is made parallel to the cases of forcible arrest, summary trial, and extradition of fugitives, who return to a state of heathenism that will, according to the testimonies of slaveholders themselves, compare with any other part of heathendom for ignorance and brutality! If any one still thinks the cases parallel, he had better get a copy of the fugitive slave law, and lay it beside the epistle to Philemon, and compare them; then look at Onesimus voluntarily returning in company with Tychicus, "a faithful minister in the Lord," with high testimonials to the church, as "a faithful and beloved brother," and compare him with the broken spirited fugitive, conveyed by the Marshal and his aids back to a slavery that he hates and loathes as worse than death!

Suppose Paul now living in a Free State. A knock is heard at his door. Who's there?

Answer—A slave mother and her child seeking refuge.

Paul—Ha! running away?

Slave—Yes, running from the hand of the oppressor.

Paul—Well you are disobeying the law, I cannot take you in.

Slave—Oh, Paul, brother Paul, for the love of Jesus, *our* Saviour, take me in!

Paul—(Paul's heart is touched at this appeal.)—Well, you may come in, but as soon as your master comes, I must deliver you up. I cannot encourage run-aways. You must obey the powers that be.

Slave—But I have heard it read in your writings, "remember those in bonds as bound with them."

Paul—Yes, but that meant those who were in prison.

Slave—Is there then no mercy for the poor slave?

Paul—No: It is “a romantic and imaginative philanthropy” that pities the slave.

Slave—No mercy for my poor child? Oh God! rather let him die, than fall into the hands of the tyrant!

At this moment another knock is heard at the door, a Marshal and slave-hunter enter.

Good morning, Reverend sir. We are on the hunt of a fugitive, and knowing your fidelity to our cause, we came to learn if you knew any thing of a woman and boy who are running away.

Paul—Why, yes. There are such ones here: What description?

(While the man is describing his property the woman slips away with her child, and makes the best of her time.) When they find she is gone, the Marshal commands Paul to “aid and assist” in her recapture. Paul starts to run, with as much patience as he can command, the race that is set before him; and who can doubt that it puts him so much in mind of Saul, in the olden time, when he used to hale men and women to prison and to death—that he approaches the conclusion, by the time his work is done, that there is after all but little difference between the Pharisee and the Christian!

But did not Peter tell servants—“Servants be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.” 1st Pet. 2: 18. Yes. And so did Paul say, “Let as many servants as are under the yoke, count their own masters worthy of all honor.” 1st Tim. 6: 1. Not because it was *right* that their masters should hold them thus, but “that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.” There had been many insurrections in various parts of the empire. Scarcely a century before the Apostle’s days, seventy thousand slaves had for six years maintained the field in Sicily, of whom twenty thousand fell in battle, and the rest were crucified. B. C. 73, a servile war raged for three years in Italy, during which time several Roman armies had been defeated, and Rome itself threatened. Spartacus, at length, with from one to two hundred thousand slaves, miserably perished. Remember too, that in a population of one hundred and twenty millions, from sixty to eighty millions were slaves. It may be easily seen why servants should be submissive that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed. No doubt that it is duty still on the slave’s part to submit to his master; but this does not meet the question, whether the fugitive from oppression should be returned. If Paul had had any reason to believe that Philemon would abuse his power, under the Roman law, and put Onesimus to death, or doom him to any of the cruel tortures to which he might be legally subjected, does any one suppose he would have sent him back? The Roman law gave a parent absolute authority over his child. And when the child arrived at adult years, he could sell him into slavery or kill him. Now, the Scriptures require children to be obedient to their parents *in all things*: and no doubt any child running away from a parent, to whom Paul could send him back, with the assurance that the child would be received and treated as himself, would be persuaded to return. But would it do to argue hence, that a child fleeing from the hands of a heartless parent, who was about to doom him to hopeless slavery, or take his life, and claiming refuge in a Christian’s house, must be repulsed and sent back again on the strength of Paul’s example, and that said Christian might be free from the charge of “high wrought sentimentalism” and “romantic and imaginative philanthropy!”

Now what are the facts respecting multitudes of fugitives from Southern slavery? Look over Southern papers and read the advertisements of runaways. Here are a few specimens:

“**Runaway**—A negro woman and two children; a few days before she went off, I burnt her with a hot iron on the left side of her face. I tried to make the letter M.”

“**Runaway**—A negro man, named Henry, his left eye out, some scars from a dirk on and under his left arm, and much scarred with the whip.”

Runaway—My negro man, named Simon, he has been shot badly in his back and right arm.

Ranaway—A negro man, named Arthur, has a considerable scar across his breast and each arm, made by a knife; *loves to talk much of the goodness of God.*

\$50 reward for the negro Jim Blake, has a piece cut out of each ear, and the middle finger of the left hand cut off to the second joint.

Read also the following, and see if you would like to send *such an one back* to bondage:

"\$100 Reward—Ranaway from the subscriber, living in Sumter county, Ala., a bright mulatto man slave, named Sam—calls himself Sam Pettigrew—*light sandy hair, blue eyes, ruddy complexion,—is so white as very easily to pass for a white man.* He carries a small memorandum book in his pocket, and will pass *very easily* for a white man, unless *closely examined*—is a first rate blacksmith and barber."

I could fill many pages with such advertisements of runaways. Is it not enough? But we are told that we are "not responsible to heaven or earth, for the after treatment of such runaway," in case we deliver him up. I ask then, wherein consisted the sin of Judas Iscariot, who delivered our blessed Lord into the hands of the chief priests? Had not the chief priests and Pharisees, as the result of the deliberations of the council, "given a commandment that if any man knew where he were, he should show it, that they might take him?" John 11: 57. Did not Judas act under this decree when he betrayed Jesus; and to prove that it was "most obviously and perfectly constitutional," what better authority could he desire than the following: "Then spake Jesus to the multitude and to his disciples saying, the Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses seat: All, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do." Matt. 23: 1-3. Why then, did Jesus say, "it were better for that man that he had not been born." And again, to Pilate, "therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin." John 19: 11. Will it be said that Judas betrayed innocent blood? It is replied, that so may we in carrying out the provisions of the fugitive law. *It has been done.* And though we *know* a man to be innocent, if called upon by a Marshal to aid and assist in the prompt and efficient execution of the law, we must do it! Now, it belongs to the proper tribunal to see to the guilt or innocence of the alleged fugitive, so did it belong to the Jewish and Roman courts to see to it in the case of Jesus! And if Judas could not be guiltless in carrying out an unrighteous decree of a Jewish council, I see not how any man can be guiltless in carrying out the unrighteous decrees of an American Congress, and persuade himself that he is not responsible for the result. It seems to me too much like Pilate's condemning Jesus, while washing his hands, and saying, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it." Matt. 27: 24.

Was not Paul himself a fugitive, let down by a basket from the walls of Damascus? Did not Obediah *hide* the prophets of the Lord in caves, and feed them with bread and water, and aid them to escape the operations of an unrighteous law? Is it less an act of humanity to hide or help away the victim of unrighteous oppression now?

When the Mohammedans settled on the shores of the Mediterranean, they considered piracy against Christians as legal. The Christian slave in the Barbary States, was entirely at the mercy of his master. In 1815 about fifty thousand white slaves were in their possession. Now would those who are so eager to persuade us of the necessity of returning fugitives have been willing to make an application of the same reasoning in that case; and tell those fifty thousand *white* slaves, that they must needs be subject to their masters, and "obey the powers that be?" Would they have quoted Paul as authority for returning a fugitive,—their own brother or father perhaps? No. But we are told those Mussulmen were "evil doers" and the Christian States were fulfilling the purpose of magistracy in punishing evil doers and releasing their brethren. And pray were not Christian nations "evil doers," when they stole Africans from their native land? And the only consideration that makes their slavery right, rather than the slavery of the whites in the Medi-

terramean is, that African tribes had not strength enough to punish the pirates. The basis then, of our slavery, and of all slavery, is, that "*might gives right.*"

2d. This law gives a freeman no fair chance to prove and guard his freedom: the chances are all against him. Any man may seize him, with or without process, take him before a Commissioner, who may be notoriously incompetent, is irresponsible, and would not be allowed to decide in the case of a runaway horse worth twenty dollars; and then upon *ex parte* testimony that Commissioner may make a certificate remanding the alleged fugitive into slavery, and there is no appeal; his certificate will hold good against "any process issued by any court, judge, magistrate or other person whomsoever." I cannot approve nor obey a law which thus strikes down all the safeguards of personal liberty, and throws the fate of the freeman into the hands of an irresponsible person, from whose decision there is no appeal. If Commissioners must be left irresponsible, let them be sworn, as the judges in ancient Egypt, never to do anything against their own consciences, even at the command of the king himself; and when we are punished for violating law, let it be as in Egypt, for refusing to relieve the wretched when it is in our power to assist him. The gross injustice which has already been perpetrated under this law in carrying free persons to slavery, is sufficient to deter any one who loves his neighbor as himself, from assisting to carry out its provisions. It is worthy of note here, that according to this law, the important and difficult question of *identity* is to be decided by the Commissioner alone; and he may decide that question, if he pleases, *merely upon the "general description"* brought by the claimant from any court of record, or judge in vocation in *any Southern State*. There is also a pecuniary consideration of five dollars, to bias the Commissioner's decision. What security is left for the free colored man?

3d. I am forbidden by this law to harbor a fugitive from slavery under a penalty of one thousand dollars, and six month's imprisonment. He may come to my door hungry, faint, bleeding, and almost naked, and ask for food and shelter, and beg me in the name of our common humanity to hide him from his pursuer, and save him from the terrors of hopeless bondage. But I dare not do it. It would be "romantic and imaginative philanthropy!" I must be forgetful to entertain strangers, lest I entertain fugitives unawares! He may be a Christian, who, though scarred and bruised, "loves to talk of the goodness of God," as the advertisement says. But no difference: I must quench my sympathy, smother every generous feeling of my nature, and give up my brother into the hands of perhaps a most heartless and venal oppressor. Is this righteousness or humanity? When I stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and the Judge points me to the "least of his disciples," whom I refused to feed, and clothe, and shelter, and rescue from oppression, saying—"Inasmuch as ye did it not to him, ye did it not to me," think you this fugitive slave law will be enough to cover my guilt, and shield me from the avenging hand of justice? Think of Paul sending a runaway back! If Paul were here to do with Onesimus what he did in Rome, *he would be liable to a fine of one thousand dollars, and six months imprisonment*; and then perhaps he too might know something of a "romantic and imaginative philanthropy!"

4th. I am compelled, if called upon, "to aid and assist in the prompt and efficient execution of this law." It is not enough that I look on and witness with aching heart the triumph of the oppressor, without throwing any obstacle in the way—for if the constitutional requirements were complied with by the States, in such a way as to give a fair trial to the alledged fugitive, and the odium of hunting and running down the fugitive, rested with the claimant, and not with the Northern freeman, I should feel bound to let the law have its course; but I must myself become a slave-catcher, and degrade my nature, and belie every sympathy of my heart, in the pursuit of the panting fugitive. I can imagine myself walking in my garden, as I often do in pleasant seasons of the year, meditating and arranging a discourse for the coming Lord's day—on this text of Scripture, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." I have proceeded so far in my meditations as to bring up fully before my mind the Good

Samaritan stooping over his bleeding and perishing enemy, and binding up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, when my delightful train of thought and gush of feeling is disturbed by the stern voice of a Marshal commanding me to assist in capturing my nearest neighbor, who is alledged to be a fugitive slave. I have good reason to believe my neighbor is a freeman, and I know that under this law it will be very easy to prove him a slave by *ex parte* testimony, tear him from his family, and by the Commissioner's certificate, doom him to slavery, so that no "process issued by any court, judge, magistrate, or other person whomsoever," can avail him any thing. He is my neighbor in distress now. But I must be subject to the higher powers, and as a law-abiding citizen, cheered by the thought that the "immortal Washington" approved the law of '93, I join in the chase and help to run him down and bind him fast, that he may be carried to a court where he dare not say a word in his own behalf, and where the prospect of making five dollars more, by a summary process, hastens the decision of an irresponsible Commissioner, before any testimony can be collected to prove the falseness of the claim. He is doomed to slavery, and sent off immediately, under a guard, to Kentucky or Tennessee, and I return to finish my sermon on the love of my neighbor, and to make my congregation weep at the touching story of the Good Samaritan! Out upon such mockery of justice and benevolence! Before God, I would rather be the enslaved man and trust in God for my reward in the eternal world, than to be the instrument of effecting the enslavement or re-enslavement of another, and be ever tormented with the thought that I had proved false to the dictates of humanity—false to the benevolence of the Gospel!

I cannot but say that I regard this law as a disgrace to the age and to the nation. It is oppressive and unrighteous in its provisions and requisitions. We could not see it carried into operation in our own community without having our blood boil with indignation; and if not now, it will hereafter be looked upon by the civilized world as a foul blot on our national character. In a series of measures tending to increase the power of the oppressor, this furnishes an awful climax of iniquity.

I know it is no light matter to disobey a law. I do not wish to make it a light matter. Yet, if a child, arrived at years of understanding, were to come here and ask the privilege of being baptized into Christ, expressing a sincere and heartfelt conviction of the truth of the Gospel, and his need of salvation; and his father were to interfere and seek to rule the conscience of his child with a rod of iron, every one here would say, let the youth obey the dictates of his own conscience and answer to his God. We would not fear that we were setting a bad example before our children, of encouraging the violation of parental rule; but by resisting such tyranny we would rather strengthen our children's regard for the exercise of just and wholesome authority over them. So do we, by refusing obedience to unrighteous laws, from reverence for the law of God, exalt in every mind and heart the laws of righteousness.

We are reminded of the value of the Union—that as United States we are the wonder and admiration of the world. But how long shall we continue so, if we tamely yield up our honest convictions of duty, to the demands of slaveholders, and sacrifice conscience itself to obtain deliverance from the incubus which hangs with dismal power over us—the dissolution of the Union. We must remember that "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." It is hard to have to feel and say as Jefferson once did—"The Almighty has no attribute that can take sides with us in this contest."

We need, I know, to humble ourselves before God in view of the perils that attend this conflict of views and interests in different sections of the country, and fast and pray and call upon him in behalf of our beloved land and nation, for preservation from discords, and internal strifes and alienations. But the blessing of God upon this nation, or any other, is never to be gained by a surrender of principle, or the practice of unrighteousness. It is in vain to fast and pray and still persist in oppressions.

Is not this the fast which I have chosen ?
 To dissolve the bands of wickedness ;
 To loosen the oppressive burthens ;
 To deliver those that are crushed by violence ;
 And that ye should break asunder every yoke ?
 Is it not to distribute thy bread to the hungry ;
 And to bring the wandering poor into thy house ?
 When thou seest the naked that thou clothe him ;
 And that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh ?
 Then shall thy light break forth like the morning,
 And thy wounds shall be speedily healed over :
 And thy righteousness shall go before thee ;
 And the glory of JEHOVAH shall bring up thy rear.
 Then shalt thou call and JEHOVAH shall answer ;
 Thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Lo I am here !
 If thou remove from the midst of thee the yoke ;
 The pointing of the finger and the injurious speech ;
 If thou bring forth thy bread to the hungry,
 And satisfy the afflicted soul ;
 Then shall thy light rise in obscurity,
 And thy darkness shall be as the noonday.—Isa. 28: 5-10.

I never felt more deeply my responsibility than I now do, in the utterance of these honest convictions of my heart. The question is a grave one, deeply affecting our interests, both politically and religiously. Circumstances have arisen to make it, in my estimation, a matter of duty to speak plainly and faithfully my sentiments—and I have now done so. I love my country—I love the Union, and share largely in the pride of the American citizen, when he looks upon the rapid progress of his nation, in all that elevates, and refines, and ennobles human society, and feels the force of the mighty argument for civil and religious liberty that goes out to the nations. I do not fear that a faithful adherence to the lessons set forth here to-day, will ever endanger the peace and prosperity of the Union. But if it did, I should still say, "Let justice be done though the heavens fall." A surrender of principle is too dear a price to pay for any blessing however desirable. Rigid adherence to principle will in the end always prove best.

Let us go with the Hebrew children to the fiery furnace, though heated seven times hotter than usual, and trust in the God whom we serve for deliverance. Let us open the window with Daniel, and pray to God, though the den of lions be in view. Let us go with Esther, in the face of the royal edict, to discharge the duties of humanity, and say with her noble heroism of soul, "If I perish, I perish." Let us stand with Apostles before rulers and judges of the earth, reasoning of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, till the guilty tremble at the potency of truth divine; and when they would straitly charge us to speak no more, let us tell them, "We ought to obey God rather than man." Nay, let us go, if need be, with Jesus to the cross, and there bear witness to the truth; but never let us compromise the claims of truth, or abate aught of the demands of our Righteous King.

Let us obey the laws of the land as far as we can with a good conscience. Let us keep free from the guilt of violence and of "railing accusations" against the "powers that be." Let us pray for our rulers and legislators, that God would turn their hearts to his testimonies and laws. And when, as in the present case, we cannot conscientiously approve and aid in carrying into effect a law which we are satisfied is unrighteous, let us see to it that it is indeed the love of a higher law that prompts us; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be honor and glory forever. Amen.